

Press release: David Sweeney appointed Executive Chair Designate of Research England

The Higher Education and Research Bill, subject to Parliamentary approval, proposes to establish Research England as a Council of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), to undertake the England only research and knowledge exchange functions currently performed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

During the transition to UKRI David will continue in his current role as Director of Research, Education and Knowledge Exchange within HEFCE alongside working as part of the shadow UKRI executive team to set up the new organisation. David will then transition to become the first Executive Chair of Research England upon the creation of UKRI in April 2018.

Research England will oversee the England-only functions in relation to research and knowledge exchange, including providing grant funding to English universities for research and knowledge exchange activities, developing and implementing the Research Excellence Framework in partnership with the UK Higher Education (HE) funding bodies, oversight of sustainability of the HE research base in England and overseeing the £900 million UK Research Partnership Investment Fund. This will secure and enhance the role of the dual support funding system for research, the protection of which will be enshrined in legislation for the first time as part of these reforms.

Announcing the appointment Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

David's contribution to the UK's world renowned science and innovation sector will ensure he will establish a strong, strategic vision for Research England. The appointment demonstrates the outstanding leadership he's shown to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and his extensive experience will be vital to the creation of UK Research and Innovation.

Sir Mark Walport, UKRI Chief Executive Designate said:

I am delighted that David Sweeney will continue his fine work that he has been undertaking at HEFCE when he becomes the first Research England Executive Chair in UKRI, subject to Parliament.

David Sweeney, Executive Chair Designate of Research England said:

I am delighted to be taking on this role. The UK's research system

is among the very best globally, with over 90% of our world-leading publications having university authorship. The partnerships between our universities and business, health, cultural and social organisations are central to economic growth as well as social and cultural impact. Research England will be an advocate to government on behalf of universities and challengers to universities to deliver to national agendas. The strategic decisions which universities make are central to the future of cities, regions, the nation and our world.

Research England will work with the other councils in UKRI to enhance our global research position and will liaise with the funding bodies in the devolved organisations to contribute at UK as well as England only level. We will also collaborate with the Office for Students as teaching and research agendas in universities are intrinsically linked to deliver both the highly-skilled graduates and new knowledge which our nation needs.

The role of executive chairs will be crucial to the ambition for UKRI to be a world-leading research and innovation organisation. Each of the 9 councils that will be part of UKRI will be led by an executive chair, a role which will combine the responsibilities of the current chair and chief executive of each council.

1) The Higher Education and Research Bill proposes the creation of a new body – UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) – that will be the strategic centre of the UK's research and innovation funding system. It will provide a strong and unified voice championing UK research and innovation, facilitating dialogue with government and partners on the global stage. The Bill also establishes 9 Councils within UKRI – 7 of the Councils reflect the functions of the existing Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England.

2) David Sweeney is a statistician and Director (Research, Education and Knowledge Exchange) at the Higher Education Funding Council for England. After gaining First Class Honours in Statistics at the University of Aberdeen, he worked at 2 Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) research institutes, as a consultant statistician then developing mathematical models of plant growth. His work on the computational aspect of this led into broader applications of IT in education and research, and he was Director of Information Services at Royal Holloway, University of London, before moving into university leadership as Vice-Principal (Communications, Enterprise and Research). In this role he was responsible for research strategy and for developing Royal Holloway's research-led commercial and consultancy activities.

He joined HEFCE in 2008 as Director (Research, Innovation and Skills) and led the development and implementation of the first Research Excellence Framework including the new impact agenda element. He is currently responsible for research policy and funding, knowledge exchange and university/business relations. He also leads on the UK Research Partnership Investment Fund and held the Health Education brief until recently. He has advised many overseas

governments on research assessment and funding and was a member of the Finch Group on Open Access to Research Outputs.

David was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Aberdeen in 2012, was Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Newcastle, NSW in 2015 and is a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.